

Faculty Report Template

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Proposal Title: Alternative Spring Break Travel/Study Abroad South Africa 2009,
Women's Studies

Country visited: South Africa

Institutions: Chris Hani Literacy School, NACOSA (an HIV-AIDS NGO) in Cape Town, CIDA University, and the Gay and Lesbian Archives, University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg

Dates of travel March 27-April 7, 2009

Number of student participants: 13 SDSU students, plus one high school student and several community members

Previous IP proposals submitted and grants awarded: None

Have all required reports been submitted? N/A

Other funding for this activity available/applied for: Dean, College of Arts and Letters

Proposal Abstract (75 word maximum):

Alternative Spring Break Study Abroad South Africa educates participants about the history of the anti-apartheid movement and its current challenges as a young multicultural democracy. Students also learn about the country and its people by engaging in service-based learning projects. Through SDSU course work and visiting schools, universities,

NGOs, and community-based organizations, students learn about current social problems like HIV-AIDS by analyzing the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality.

Travel report:

I. Opening/overview of intentions/activity

I continued the collaboration between the Women's Studies and Africana Studies Departments in taking students to South Africa to learn about South African history, culture, and some of the major social problems facing the country today. Students may elect to receive three units of Women's Studies or Africana Studies credit for work completed before, during, and after the trip. Students taking WS597 focused on women in the anti-apartheid movement as well as HIV-AIDS in relation to gender, race, class, and sexuality. Although Africana Studies and Women's Studies majors and minors are interested in the program, since its inception in 2003 undergraduate and graduate students from many different colleges, departments, and programs at SDSU have participated.

II. In preparation for the trip abroad

In addition to working with the Chair of Africana Studies, Shirley Weber, and Prof. Adisa Alkebulan to coordinate the activities of this year's program, I made contacts with several individuals and institutions in South Africa, including two of the most important NGOs dealing with the HIV-AIDS pandemic, the AIDS Consortium in Johannesburg (Denise Hunt, director) and NACOSA in Cape Town (Dr. Maureen Van Wyk, director).

I also established a relationship with the LGBT community in South Africa through the Joint Working Group (a consortium of activist groups in all parts of the country), the Hope and Unity Metropolitan Community Church in Johannesburg, and the Gay and Lesbian Archives (GALA) at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (primarily through Paul Mokgethi-Heath, archivist at GALA, founder of the Joint Working Group, and Co-Pastor of Hope and Unity MCC.)

Profs. Weber and Alkebulan established the relationship with CIDA University, an accredited institution that offers low-cost business and other degree programs to students from the poorest rural and urban areas of the country. Donors and supporters of CIDA include well-known corporations and individuals such as Sir Richard Branson, Nelson Mandela, Oprah Winfrey, and Suzie Orman.

III. Upon arrival/specific activity

Alternative Spring Break South Africa is not a conventional study abroad program that sends students to one university to study for a semester or an extended period of time, but the program does include visiting educational institutions and doing service-learning projects designed to give students first-hand knowledge of the country and its people.

This year that included taking school supplies and meeting with faculty and students at Chris Hani Literacy School and attending a seminar on HIV-AIDS NGO work at NACOSA in Cape Town. In Soweto we took school supplies to a preschool, painted houses, and learned about the work of the Kliptown Youth Program. In Johannesburg we met with students, administrators, and faculty at CIDA University to learn about their programs and to find ways for future collaborations. Also in Johannesburg we met with members of the LGBT community and representatives of the Gay and Lesbian Archives at the University of Witwatersrand.

Every year students learn about South African history and culture through tours of historic and cultural sites such as the World Heritage site of Robben Island, the Apartheid Museum, Constitutional Hill, and the black townships of Langa near Cape Town and Soweto near Johannesburg.

IV. Conclusion, recommendation, and next step?

Alternative Spring Break South Africa is a short-term, intensive international program that has involved students and faculty from many colleges, departments, and programs since 2003. This is the second year the Women's Studies Department has participated in the program, and on the basis of my experience, I would highly recommend that the collaboration continue. I believe that Women's Studies has enriched the program by adding a focus on gender and sexuality and by making new academic and NGO connections there.

Unfortunately, this year the number of student participants was much lower than recent years. There is no doubt that the economy was the major factor in this decline: in December I had a list of 16 students committed to making the trip and taking the Women's Studies course attached to it, but by the end of January all but five had withdrawn, in many cases because they or their parents had lost jobs.

Nevertheless, the program continues to be successful in that students report that the program is a life-changing experience. Since I know some of these students from other classes I can attest to the fact that it has indeed given them a broader vision of the world and a desire to do

something meaningful with their lives. Examples of expanded horizons since the trip are their careful following of the recent South African elections, and the funds they have raised from sororities, family, and friends to buy new playground equipment for the preschool in Kliptown, one of the poorest areas of Soweto.

The program has also brought students from South Africa to San Diego in various capacities. I think it is important to continue such exchanges--for example, with students from CIDA next year--given the current economic situation, perhaps cutting costs by creating a distance learning exchange between our two universities.

Next year I would also like to recruit participants from the LGBT Student Union on campus as well as students from any department or college who are interested in learning about LGBT rights and activism in an international context.

All information should be sent to The Office of International Programs via e mail:

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